

A New Beginning for Afghanistan's Pharmaceutical Industry

PRESS RELEASE

GENEVA - 15 July 2003 - Construction will begin shortly for the first generic medicines production plant in Kabul, Afghanistan. The plant is the first initiative to restart local basic medicines production since the end of the Afghan wars and it will be one of the first concrete reconstruction projects led by the international community in partnership with local entrepreneurs to rehabilitate Afghanistan's productive infrastructure.

The project partners - the Business Humanitarian Forum, the European Generic medicines Association, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Afghan businessman and physician, Dr. Karim Baz - signed a Memorandum of Understanding today which details each partner's commitment to the project and its overall business plan.

he plant will initially produce 300 - 400 million tablets of essential medicines including analgesics and antibiotics. Currently, all medicine is imported to Afghanistan. "This greatly increases the cost of basic medicines in Afghanistan," stated Dr. Baz. "Currently less than 5% of the Afghan population has access to good quality medicine. Drugs play an important role in the provision of health services as they are essential for protecting, maintaining and restoring health, which can then be easily accessed by the Afghan people."

The plant represents a new model for post conflict reconstruction and economic development projects. The European Generic medicines Association's "Access to Medicines" program made an initial contribution of machinery, technical and business expertise. The Business Humanitarian Forum, in collaboration with the UNDP, followed through and sought local partners and support for the project. The plant will be 100% Afghan owned and managed, and will initially provide approximately 30 permanent jobs to Afghans.

John Maresca, President of the Business Humanitarian Forum commented, "This project fills two important requirements for Afghanistan's reconstruction: local supply of badly needed basic medicines, and a new start for Afghanistan's private sector, which can provide jobs and economic development. It is an excellent example of how business can contribute to the reconstruction of a post-conflict economy."

The medicines plant is the pilot project of a larger public-private partnership program that will be carried out jointly by the UNDP Afghanistan country office and the Business Humanitarian Forum. The program seeks to rehabilitate the country's economic infrastructure with the support of the private sector. The medicines plant represents a first step in a series of sustainable economic development projects that will provide a very visible reason for hope for the future.

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